

NOTICE

This transcript contains a Living History Interview conducted and prepared as part of the Fernald Living History Project. The narrations, descriptions, perceptions, opinions and beliefs expressed in this interview are solely those of the interviewee(s) and are not to be attributed directly or indirectly, to the United States Government, to the U.S. Department of Energy, to Fluor Daniel, Inc., to any Fluor Daniel Fernald teaming partner company, to any of their officers or employees, to the Fernald Living History Project or to anyone associated with the Fernald Living History Project.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Name: Dan Finfrock

Date Interviewed: 5/27/99 Date Transcribed: 7/6/99 Tape: FLHP- 24 Project Number 20012

Tape FLHP0047

22:01:15

Q:

OK. Ah, first of all we ask you the hard questions. If you could give us your name and then spell your last name just so we have it right.

A:

Alright. Dan Finfrock. F-I-N-F-R-O-C-K, and it is Dan, it is not Daniel.

Q:

Yes, just D-A-N.

A:

Right.

22:01:31

Q:

Ok, um. First of all if you could give us a little background. When and why did your family move to the Fernald area? How long have you been here?

A:

Well, I came to Fernald when I was in the third grade of school. And ah, between the second and third grade, and we lived in Dar Town. And Dad had the idea, we kids would be much better off living on a farm and little more elbow room. And so he bought this property. It was pretty much run down, out at ah, lets see, between Auburn and St. Charles, back on Gates Road. And ah, we lived out there until, oh I was, I think a junior in college, when Dad finally sold the farm. A lot of experiences out there I wouldn't give up for anything.

22:02:24

Q:

And how far away from the Fernald plant were you?

A:

Well, from what I figure, it was a little over 6 miles, about 6.1 miles, ah the plant was southwest of where we were. Actually, it was kind of, we were downwind from the plant to tell you the truth.

22:02:42

Q:

Wow. And ah, were you in the area when they were building the plant?

A:

Yes.

Q:

Tell us about that.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

A:

Well, it was kind of a secret. Ah, they didn't tell um, much what was going on, except we all knew it was an atomic plant. And ah, Miss Shipper, who was our teacher at school, 6th grade teacher, she seemed to know exactly what was going on out there, and she told us that it was ah, refining uranium ore, making it into a concentrate, to ship it she thought to Oakridge, for the production of atomic bombs.

22:03:24

A:

And ah, that's all that was said. There was not any word of danger, radioactivity, anything like that. It was just, hey that plant was necessary and, I know everyone was kind of proud of the fact that the plant was being built there, because it did bring in jobs and they came in we were told because of our aquifer and that one time they were drawing more water supposedly than the city of Cincinnati was using for the process out there.

22:03:53

A:

And um, actually you know when we went by it we was always look over when we went to Ross we would look over and see the plant and kind of wonder well what's there. 'Course there were all kinds of stories about how they built all that underground, which is not true but we believed it then and so forth. Yeah.

22:04:19

Q:

So uh, what purpose did you and your friends think the plant served at the time?

A:

A:

Well, 'course everything was anti Soviet Union then and the Cold War was building and we knew that it was radioactive material or material that was being built for the atomic bomb. And back then that was very necessary and nobody questioned the uh, the role of the government. We thought this was the best place or the government wouldn't have put it here. And um, it was, everybody treated it out there at that time as a sort of a good community thing that took place.

22:05:00

Q:

Great, great. And um, what kind of myths or legends did you hear about the plant back then?

A:

I only heard of one which was out kind of detrimental. And one there was one of the kids that was in school with me, um, he had a brother that worked out there. And supposedly the story came down that his brother got very ill and his stomach turned bright yellow. I don't ever know what happened to the guy or anything like that but that was a story and the guy's still living, he's in his '90's, so he must have not been too bad and I doubt if that had anything to do with the plant.

22:05:45

A:

But who knows, at that time, it was secret. You know that was not talked about like Oakridge, that was not talked about. But everyone out there knew it was an atomic plant and they were dealing with uranium and radioactive material. It was never hidden by the plant you know.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

22:06:04

Q:

Um, you mentioned being downwind from the plant, did your family ever have any concern about being so close, living so close to the plant?

A:

No one did. I don't think anybody had any problems to even living next door because that was again a very hush-hush thing as to what was going on. I don't think anybody at that time out there really understood what radioactivity was. I don't think they understood it could be detrimental. It was just a necessary thing and no, there was no concerns on that at all.

22:06:45

Q:

Good, good. OK. And um, what kind of contact did you have with plant workers? Did you know anybody that worked at the plant?

A:

Uh, just one, the fellow that I mentioned. And it was only through his brother that was in my class at school. And anytime I would ask him about what he did out there he said I can't tell you. And that was OK you know. It was for the government, and that was necessary. If the government was doing it, it must be OK. And so.

22:07:27

Q:

And so you saw the community when you were a child, did you see the community change, or how did the plant being built in that specific place change the surrounding communities?

A:

From where I lived, it didn't. Um, we went to Ross, well we called it Venice then, that's where it should be, shouldn't be Ross, but we went to Venice about once probably a month and um, we were pretty isolated up in the area there and I don't think the plant really did make much of a change in my particular area where I grew up. And being a farm boy my nearest neighbor was a mile, we didn't get out very much. In fact, mom went to um, went to the grocery store once a month.

22:08:17

A:

And when we came to Hamilton, um, but we pretty much stayed out there. As far as building was concerned, oh, I remember a few houses being built out at, out at Venice but that's about all that I personally remember. Of course I wasn't really right at the plant so I really don't know, you know.

22:08:42

Q:

So what did you guys do for fun?

A:

Oh, uh, the nearest neighbor being a mile, I remember the neighbor, he was about the same age I was, my family was not very well endowed money-wise. In fact, we were quite poor. And we would go down and raid the neighborhood dump, we would get all types of wheels and we'd make tractors and trucks and on the banks we would have all kinds of roads and that sort of thing. We read a lot. Um, family was pretty darn close. The neighbors were very close. If anyone needed help, everyone was there.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

22:09:30

A:

We knew everyone and my greatest, I was kind of a loner back at that particular time and I spent a lot of times out in the woods. In fact, I knew the name of every tree on our farm. And we'd build dams in the streams, a lot to do. But, I think the kids nowadays don't have the ingenuity to originate ideas like we did. And I think us not having what we didn't have, I think that really kind of helped me in original thinking to tell you the truth. We'd use spoons for plows and you know just things like that. We had a good time, I can't remember a bad time out there.

22:10:17

Q:

Can you tell us a little bit about some of your neighbors that lived around?

A:

They were um, they were all farmers. The fellow that lived up the road from us, Mr. Croucher, um, he had a dairy herd and he drove the school bus. So we were on the end of the route so we always got home at 4:30 from school which was quite late. He spent all of his time farming pretty well and driving the bus. Then up on the hill were the Bishop's. Um, they were farmers. He also had a job in, in town in Hamilton. The Dowd's lived down by the creek. They were big farmers. Um also they had a dairy herd. Then everybody from the Connect's.

22:11:13

A:

Again dairy, it was all dairy around there, the Garner's and back behind us were the Mannis's and I remember the first TV set that they got. We all went over every night at 4:30 as soon as we got off the bus. The little television set, it was about 6 inches like that, we'd watch Howdy Doody. That was the biggest deal. Every night we'd go watch Howdy Doody. But good people. I remember when mom was pregnant with my brother and dad had a job. It was all worked out with the Bishop's, no telephones, we didn't have any.

22:11:52

A:

In fact the first 2 years we lived out there we didn't have electricity which was kind of nice. And if mom thought that she was in labor, she was to turn a light on in a certain room in the house, a red light and Jim Bishop would be down and take her to the hospital and that's where our communication was. Um, every though we lived far apart, communication was pretty close.

22:12:30

OK. There were a couple more things I might want to point out. Um, we lived one mile from the hard road, and uh, it was back an old gravel road and we would walk out to a place called Isis, which is right where Gates Road and 129 join together. And there was Talbert's filling station there and for many years they still had the old gas pumps that you pumped and the gasoline went up in the big glass container and you measured up there so many gallons and um, Pierson Talbert was the fellow that owned the place and he was up in his '80's and whatnot.

22:13:06

He farmed, would only have horses with the power things, no tractors and so we hung around Talbert's filling station quite a bit. And right across the road there um, was the blacksmith shop and old Mr. Garner um, he and his son Harold operated the blacksmith shop and we used to go up there oh by the hour and watch him shoe horses and work. And I remember one time my little electric train, the side rod broke on

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

my steam engine and I took it up to him and he stood there and worked I bet 2 hours and made a new drive rod for my little train and so forth. And he was so proud of that thing and charged me a nickel.

22:13:51

Q:

That's great, oh my gosh. Tell me a little bit about Venice in those days. When you were in town what was going on in there, anything was it?

A:

Well, they had three bars. Um, it was a heavily traveled crossroads right there 'cause you had the 126 and then you had the U.S. 27. And um, our dentist was there, our physician was there. I don't recall many of the stores because mom and dad didn't frequent those very much. I remember there was I think a little hardware store in the area right there. But it was just a nice quaint little town that was just a lazy little town. That's what it amounted to.

22:14:44

A:

And uh, I remember the big news, I cannot remember the exact date, was when one of the big gasoline trucks was coming out of Hooven and came into town and he went across the intersection and an elderly farmer ran the stop sign, hit him broadside and every fire company from the surrounding areas came in. A lot of Venice was lost at that particular time. It was the biggest news in the county, probably the biggest fires in the county and up till that point it was quite an exciting thing, yeah. We all went down to see it, you know.

22:15:25

Q:

We've interviewed Lew Buck, do you know him?

A:

No I don't.

Q:

He lives down in Venice, Ross and he had photos of that, glad you brought that up because we had some photos to show.

A:

Oh, yeah.

Q:

It was a huge fire.

A:

Oh, it was.

Q:

And the Fernald Fire Department actually uh, came down and responded to that fire.

A:

Well, good deal.

22:15:46

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

Q:

Yeah, it's kind of interesting. Uh, do you remember the flood any in that area, I think it was '52 maybe?

A:

Well, I remember Indian Creek flooding quite a bit. Again, we didn't get down to the Miami River because our little community was up there between Auburn, which was called Ganter Town then, and St. Charles and back on the farm there. But I remember Indian Creek flooded quite a bit and was well up in the farmland and so forth. And I remember a story about on Indian Creek down at, it was in the afternoon, once the school buses left Ross High School, went across the Indian Creek Bridge and within about 10 minutes the bridge went out. They had just gotten across.

22:16:34

A:

And we had to make big detours because of that I remember. But Indian Creek used to get really wild up through there. And the Miami River, it got pretty expansive out in through the there, the whole area is flood plain. So water should go there, yeah.

22:16:55

Q:

Let's move into your teaching years. You taught at Fairfield right? Is that right?

A:

Yes. I came to Fairfield the fall of 1958 temporarily and taught here a year. And then at the end of my second year I had contract out at UG in Oregon. And my second year I met this little gal who taught literature to the same kids that I did. Well, you know how that goes, I'm still here. And I taught there 34 years and retired in '92. My wife and I both retired at the same time. And I did 2 things I swore I'd never do.

22:17:30

A:

One was go with a school teacher and the other one was marry a briar hopper from Kentucky and I killed both of them off with one stone you know. But best move I ever did. I'd have to say that much. But we taught the same kids and I remember we taught 7th grade then and I used to tell all kinds of tales about her. In fact one day I remember she had to take off her shoes and show the kids her feet 'cause I told all the kids that she had web feet and swam like a duck. We used to do that all the time.

22:18:04

A:

And fact our romance was kind of propagated by the students as one of my top level, the top level of the class of that year was sitting there and I remember this one boy Jim got up and he said Mr. Finrock, would you go out with Ms. White, that was her name then. And I said, I don't know I guess I would but how do I know she'd go out with me. He said, she would, we already asked her. So, and so we went out and one thing led to another. We've been married now since 1960.

22:18:37

Q:

That's great. That's a great story. Um, those were the Cold War years pretty much (yeah) and first of all how did your family react to the Cold War?

A:

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

Oh, like everyone else, we hated the Soviet Union. Uh, there was a tremendous amount of propaganda coming out at that particular time. True or not true. And it was kind of like, it was a struggle for survival. It was something that had to be done. And I think the Cold War, a lot of good things came out of the Cold War. Our space program was one of them. And I think of all the little things in fact, the camera that you're using right now, the miniaturization of that, that came out of the Cold War.

22:19:33

A:

And uh, we put a tremendous amount of research at that particular period of time and I think that's something that's necessary. We need, if we're going to stay on top of things. So, the Cold War, yeah, took a lot of money, there was a lot of ill feelings toward a lot of people, but they had them towards us too. And overall I think our technology is advanced because of it. I'm not saying the whole thing is good, I'm just trying to pick out a good point that came out of the Cold War. And I was very happy to see the Cold War end. But I hope our technology keeps up now.

22:20:14

Q:

And your students, having taught for 32 years (34) 34 years out in Fairfield you probably came across generations of students really (yeah), new class every year how did they react to the Cold War?

A:

How did they react to it? Well I remember when um, I was thinking of Sputnik, when that went up and much talked about at school. And I taught 7th grade at that particular time and we spent quite a bit of time talking about how it was done, and so forth like that. And I remember the President making a commitment that we would do that and we'd get ahead of them and it was the big race. The only problem I think that the kids at that particular time were concerned was with the draft. The boys especially that really beat on their minds. Where would they go, what would they have to do.

22:21:13

A:

And that sort of thing. The very negative part of the whole thing and a lot of my students did go into the military, did quite well. I've saw some of my students I really had some concerns about, went to the military, found themselves and I consider some of them my best friends now. Uh, really neat people. But as far as the Cold War is concerned I remember also when uh, John Glenn made his first flight. We were all packed in front of that television set. Everybody in the school was packed in front of a television set.

22:21:50

A:

And since I taught science, most of the people were in my room. And wall to wall and everybody cheered when it went off and when he landed safely everybody cheered you know. The whole school just shut down until that part was over with. It was quite unique. A lot of tensions back then. And I remember when they built the missile silos up here at Oxford. Uh, it was a scary time because we lived near the atomic plant. We lived near the big GE plant. We lived near the Industrial Complex of Hamilton.

22:22:29

A:

And we're right in the middle of all this and it was pretty well accepted that if we were going to get bombed, we were going to be right smack in the middle of it and there wasn't a darn thing we could do about it. We just crossed our fingers hoped and prayed that the Nike missiles and everything did their job. But I knew quite a few of my students were in the military and were stationed up at the Nike base up

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

there. And I got some information as to what was going on and that sort of thing. But I always tried to keep apprized at what went on and we talked quite freely when I taught biology the last 24 years, I taught biology at the high school students.

22:23:09

A:

We talked about what went on and so forth. In fact, the Fernald plant, when I was in charge of the Science Club, we would go out to the Fernald plant and Mr. Pope, Don Pope was his first name, and he lived right around the corner here from me. He made arrangements for me to bring my science class out. They spent all day with them. They fed them lunch and they had the top people from each department come in and what they did is they addressed the kids, if you want a career here, this is what your going to have to do in school. And these are the classes you're going to have to take, how do you apply for jobs and they did a magnificent job for us. They really did. I look forward to going out there.

22:23:56

Q:

That's great, wow. And um, in the mid '80's and the late '80's there was a lot of media attention to um, things that were happening at Fernald, especially a dust collector leak that happened out at Plant 9 (yeah) and there was a lot of concern about the environment at that time, um, were your students involved in, did they know what was happening out there, were they concerned about it?

22:24:22

A:

Sure. Oh, yeah. Because radioactivity, I feel, is like electricity back at the turn of the century. I remember my grandmother saying out at her little village, when they brought electricity in, no one would have it in their house because they were afraid that the electricity would jump out and kill them. And there was a lot of misunderstanding about radioactivity and that same paranoia I think built in too, that to the point where there was just, they were afraid because they didn't understand what was going on.

22:25:00

A:

And in my classroom I would try to quell some of that, not to the point where we needed to not have concern about it, but then the media kept going. And I think it was National Lead of Ohio I think ran it at that particular time and some of the shortcuts that they were doing. Let's face it, they were running Fernald for one reason, to make money for the stockholders and so forth. And everybody was afraid that they were cutting corners too much. Letting things get too out of hand.

22:25:35

A:

And that's when the public concern really I think started. Um, and a lot of it was due to the fact, I feel that National Lead didn't have a real good PR department at the time to really explain fully what was going on. Maybe it was government regulations they couldn't but I think the lack of communication really hurt the plant severely.

22:26:03

Q:

Wow. And uh, do you remember discussing at all any of the cleanup with your students too? The cleanup efforts?

A:

Yeah, and I think the, I had to explain to the students, and I still have a little bit of concern, especially

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

about the silos. I'm not so sure that we presently have the technology to remove the stuff. We talked about um, I think it came up about the glass, putting it in the glass. And the kids were all but why and whatnot. So I took a piece of vaseline glass that we have here at the house and I took it to school and I said OK here it is put a Geiger counter up against it and the Geiger counter goes bonkos. And um, this is what they're doing, you can handle this, there's no problem with it, it would be the safest way to go.

22:26:55

A:

And I think everyone was concerned with how they were going to do this and that was one thing I was able to talk to the kids about. Another thing I talked about, as heavy as the uranium is, it's not going to go very far. Uh, it won't travel like a lot of dust will and especially in the Fairfield area here, I didn't think we had any great concerns other than the fact of the silos leaking and getting down in our aquifer where we all get our drinking water. And we were all concerned about that. And I phoned National Lead several times and people, thereafter, and I never really got a clear cut answer as to what was going to be done about it and I passed that one to the kids, we just don't know yet.

22:27:43

A:

We've got to do some technology learning here and developing in order to do this. But then I would explain to the kids how the aquifer was flowing and that gave me an opportunity to talk about the geology of the area and how the geology affected the biology of the area. And how our aquifer was really flowing away from Fairfield not towards Fairfield. We would be all right but Cleves wouldn't you know. And that eased the minds of the kids here, but you know poor Cleves. That sort of thing.

22:28:22

Q:

And uh, what are your personal impressions of the work that's going on at Fernald right now?

A:

Well I have a former student that works out there who is an extremely good friend right now. And in fact his parents have been our friends for years. And um, anytime I have a question, I ask Greg and Greg usually finds out the answer for me. And as far as the plant is concerned out there now, I'm pleased with what's going on. I think right now, they're making a really concerted effort to get the job done. It's going to take time, and the American people don't like to hear that word, they want everything done instantly. And, but it's going to take time.

22:29:09

A:

No one wants the stuff shipped through their backyard, like the old farmer when we were standing there watching the train go out, and he says I really don't like this stuff going through my property. And I said how else are they going to do it? Do you want them to send it by truck on the highway? No. Well, do you want to fly it out? Well that would be worse. And he suddenly realized, hey, rail was the best way to go. And um, that is something I think needs to be addressed a little more with the group how safe the rail travel really is taking it out there.

22:29:43

A:

But no, I'm pleased with the publicity and when I went out there to the first train, I got out there on Friday, well it wasn't leaving till Monday, and um, the lady came out and very cordial, I could not have received a better welcome, when the train went out everybody was so willing to help you know. As long as you were

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

in this particular area, fine, do what you want. Use common sense and so forth. I'm pleased with it. I really am. I cannot go along with the people who are saying that they believe that was an animal feed plant.

22:30:28

A:

I think that the people who believe that even back in that particular time are like the ostriches, they didn't understand it, so they put their head in the sand. Made up what they wanted to. Even people who moved in, I think one of the responsibilities of a person moving into a place is find out all about where you're moving to. Not move in and then find out. And if they didn't like it, well, you know they should have learned a little bit more about it. But I always knew it was an atomic plant.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

FLHP0048

23:01:05

Q:

Um, let's get a little bit into some of your neighbors or friends that um, didn't know quite what the plant was, or what it was doing. Tell me the impressions they got of the plant.

A:

Well, I think your question is kind of wrong due to the fact the people who lived around us knew what the plant was doing. And I think the long time residents out there that were educated they knew what the plant was doing. And I think, as you know, what is it 10% of the people in the United States can't tell you who the President is. I think that group of people and people who are similar to that that really don't keep on what's going on around them. I think they just, the plant was there and there was no concern about it. But all of our neighbors, there was no question what was going on out there.

23:02:09

A:

And it was the atomic plant, that's the way I knew about it and the Feed Materials thing came out much, much later. In fact, even after the sign was out there, Feed Materials plant, we still called it the atomic plant you know. So the people, I really feel, that was the, thought it wasn't an atomic plant, they weren't facing reality and they didn't know what was going on around them frankly. And I was amazed when I read in the newspaper the first time, when the one lady, or gentleman, I don't remember which in one of the meetings stood up and said Well, I thought this was the Purina plant because of the checkerboard smoke stack and so forth.

23:02:56

A:

Well, my heavens, you go to any airport installation at that time, every stack and every tower and everything else was checkerboard, red and white. So yeah, Purina did have a checkerboard but it was nothing like what was on the towers or anything at that particular, it was still the atomic plant. I was amazed when that came out, I really was. It caught me totally by surprise. In fact I told my wife, I said gee whiz, these people don't know what's going on you know. And I got a chuckle out of it. Of course they were very serious, very serious.

23:03:34

A:

And rightfully so, they lived right next to it and so forth but there again I think the lack of information coming out of the plant in its earlier days to the local people and keep feeding them material of information, I think the lack of that eventually caught up with them. And I think that's why a lot of this concern is taking place yeah. But my neighbors were all basically glad it was there because that was employment and we were getting things done for the atomic bomb which we needed. So, integral part.

23:04:14

Q:

So you mentioned your friends and neighbors got a lot of jobs, how did it change the economy do you know, did you get a feel for that?

A:

No I didn't. I didn't get a feel for that due to the fact that the people around us were farmers, remained farmers and all I remember is the one fellow that I mentioned earlier, the Singles boy who worked out

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

there. Uh, he was the only one that I really knew that worked out there. Um, changing the economy, I don't think it did in our particular area in Riley Township and the northern part of Morgan Township. It really didn't. We kept on farming like we always had done and so forth, yeah.

23:04:57

Q:

Do you attend many public meetings that are put on by Fernald now or did you in the past?

A:

No, I never have. Um, I kind of got the idea a lot of that was by the groups that were down there just to basically raise hell. And the lawsuits that came out of it and so forth, no I didn't, I didn't take part in that and I didn't think I should and the plant didn't affect people I knew adversely at all so no, there was no need for me to go to there. I took the kids out there, the Science Club as I mentioned earlier and whatnot, and the information I needed I could get from Mr. Pope and that sort of thing for the kids so no I didn't take part in that. I think I might in the future.

23:05:53

Q:

Why is that?

A:

Oh, I don't know, just curiosity. I got a bug here. I think curiosity. Um, I just want to see some of the people that come up with some of these wild notions. And be there when they come up with them. And maybe I can put something in to maybe ---- or whatnot from the information that I have on the thing and um, another thing is, I think your publicity group out there is, I like to see them work. They're doing a good job. Give me another reason to go yeah. Just to keep my nose in public affairs to a great degree. I like to do that.

23:06:44

Q:

Great, thank you. Um, now your sort of interested in the shipment by rail because you're interested in trains (right) and you mentioned to me when we talked on the phone about 10-15 years ago there were some shipments by rail going out, can you tell us a little bit about that?

23:07:01

A:

Oh, I'll never forget that one. I was out there and they had all these cars out there and I was following the local down to the chemical plants down at Fernald property. And um, when we went back up the cars were sealed, they had a radioactive seal on them and I was concerned about them and so forth. And I'll never forget, one of our councilmen, or not councilmen, county commissioner, he was running for office, and one of them came back and he had a Geiger counter. And he got a reading and um, he, I think he was elected because of all the stink he made about the thing, as politicians, they get something like that and they try to run with it.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

23:07:50

A:

But it all came home when, I went out there and the Geiger counter we had at school and put it up against the side of that car and it went tick, tick, tick. We pointed it out in the field it went tick, tick, tick. I put it against my watch it went tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick. So there was more radioactivity in my watch than there was in that whole cotton-pickin' train and the guy got elected because he raised such a stink about it you know.

23:08:12

A:

But there again, the ignorance of people not knowing what radioactivity is and what's being done out there yeah. But they shipped things out there, not too much was said when it went out. Of course they didn't announce when it was going out ahead of time or anything else. And uh, the shipments were going to Georgia, it was machinery that went out by those cars, yeah.

23:08:35

Q:

And uh, how do you feel about the, we just sent one of our first trains out with shipments of waste out to, out West (uh-huh) and you were there when the first train was leaving (right), what's your impression of that whole project?

23:08:53

A:

Well, where else is it going to go? What are you going to do with it? It's the safest place we got now to put it. Getting it there, the rail is the safest, cheapest and most expedient way of doing it. Um, I thought the whole thing was handled well. The amount of security as far as safety is concerned, I think went real well. Although I always harassed employees of CSX about CSX not doing very well. And it had tickled me to death when they came in, they backed up against the train. And the announcement was to start the pull and they'd start the pull the train and pulled it in two.

23:09:40

A:

But that was because when the group at Fernald put them together, they didn't get one of the pins on the couplers down. No big deal you know that happens all the time. But here everyone was around to see the first thing and that happens you know if anything could happen. But I think the crew, I think handled it very well. I followed it clear down to Cincinnati. And they went cautiously. Um, the first load, but I think they went a lot slower than what they needed to. Um, they need to next time send more locomotives down to help pull it up the hill 'cause that is one heavy train. It was kind of exciting to see that go out and to know hey something is being done.

23:10:31

Q:

And what would you say to somebody who says hey I don't want that stuff going through my back yard?

A:

Who's back yard do you want it to go through? Um, if it goes by rail, that's the safest way, what are the chances of that train going as slow as it is, with as good a track as we have, that track has been rebuilt. The bridge has been rebuilt down in Okeana. Um, what safer way can you do. It's a heck of a lot better, the alternatives of letting it set where it is versus taking it to Utah where it can be stored safely. I think going to Utah outweighs anything else by far. And I think if the people along the way understood and watched it

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

and were a part of it, I don't think there would be any problem. I really don't.

23:11:28

Q:

Did you happen to watch that uh mini series they had on last weekend, called Atomic Train?

A:

No, I didn't. I heard about it. In the rail fan community it's been quite talked about and that sort of thing.

No, I was, I was in Switzerland up in the Alps when that thing came on.

Q:

That's right. We've been watching it at lunch and actually laughing out loud because of the way they've got the waste on there, in like red drums out in the open and everything and we're like oh.

A:

Well, you know any of those, those are built for sensationalism. And um, I remember there was one article about a runaway train. But what actually happened in the movie, couldn't happen in reality. It just couldn't happen. And as you say, they leave the drums out in the open and things like that well, you know they're after affect. They're trying to be the jaws of atomic world, I think, in those movies. After all, they make those movies for one thing, to make money. And the American people like things like that but it's a shame to get a little backlash against the trains running and really taking it out and how safe they really are.

23:12:40

Q:

Yeah, the news did a couple of local you know tie-ins with the movie and they showed the Fernald train leaving and stuff and we were like ahhh.

A:

I know, I know. There again, newscasts must make money or they don't go so they have to sensationalize.

23:13:01

Q:

Um, now once the Fernald site is all torn down, which of course is what they're doing, taking it all apart, dismantling it, what would you like to see the land used for?

A:

Well, my understanding, I have to ask you a question. Radioactivity at that time will be very low almost nonexistent from what I understand on that. Um, I think that one of the things that needs to be done, um, I think there needs to be something to display the history of that thing. Because that was a very integral part of the Cold War, very important part of the Cold War and um I think I heard one of your staff mention that, they were talking about a museum. I think that's an excellent idea.

23:13:45

A:

And I can see the area for hiking trails. I can see a nature preserve, of course that's my biology background. Um, but I think it ought to be for public use and I think the **park idea that I heard about is an excellent idea**. It would be a good one. Um, course I'm for open land, that's open land that can be for future generations. A real good idea, good idea.

23:14:15

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

Q:

Good, good. And uh, is there anything that you want to add? Anything we didn't cover you wanted to add?

A:

Not really. Uh, I think it's been quite an experience after, from learning about it at the beginning as to what happened when you look, you know hindsight better than foresight as to what went on and that sort of thing. In a way, you can never take the Riley out of me. The Riley Township and the farm. and that was a part of it out there, a very important part of the, of my existence out there. And I don't think it was at all a bad thing. I really, really don't. I'm not as afraid of it as a lot of people are, except the silos. That's the only thing I'm concerned about. And I've got faith, I think the technology will come. They have to.

23:15:15

Q:

Great. And uh, have you heard exactly what kind of waste is in the silos, I mean have you discussed that with anybody or?

A:

Uh, yeah. Yeah, pretty potent stuff. Um it's in electric form I understand on the thing. And it's um probably the, some of the nastiest waste that they made out there is in the silos. And they've got to get off of our aquifer that's all there is to it. Or permanently sealed and I don't know of a way to permanently seal it with our present technology. We need to get it probably in that glass form. I hope that project flies, I really do.

23:15:57

A:

I think it's a good project and a good way of doing it if they can control the gases and the melting of it, of the problems that they had. But I think it will work out. I think it will work out fine. I got faith.

23:16:15

Q:

Great. OK. You want to get a little bit of nat sound? Terrific. All right be quite on the set, shut those birds up. This is nat sound.